

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please cancel claims 1-17, and add new claims 18-45, as follows:

Claims 1-17 (Cancelled).

Claim 18 (New) A composition comprising a benzoate mixture of isononyl benzoate and one or more benzoic esters whose alkoxy groups have from 7 to 13 carbon atoms, wherein said composition is produced by a process comprising:

reacting in a reaction mixture, via an esterification reaction, benzoic acid with an alcohol comprising a mixture of isononanol and at least one alcohol having from 7 to 13 carbon atoms present, wherein the alcohol is used in stoichiometric excess, wherein the esterification reaction takes place at a temperature of 160°C to 250°C in the presence of a tin(II) catalyst;

removing from the reaction mixture by azeotropic distillation a liquid comprising water being formed during the esterification reaction, and unreacted alcohol;

removing from the reaction mixture after completion of the esterification reaction unreacted alcohol; and

separating off from the reaction mixture, without base treatment, tin(II) catalyst remaining after the removal of unreacted alcohol to produce the benzoate mixture having a tin(II) concentration of less than 1 mg/kg (ppm).

Claim 19 (New) The composition according to claim 18, wherein said removing of unreacted alcohol from the reaction mixture is carried out by distillation, stripping, or a combination thereof.

Claim 20 (New) The composition according to claim 18, wherein said separating off of tin(II) catalyst from the reaction mixture is carried out by filtering or centrifuging at a temperature of less than 160°C.

Claim 21 (New) The composition according to claim 18, wherein said process further comprises replacing during the esterification reaction all or a portion of the volume of liquid removed from the reaction mixture with recycled alcohol.

Claim 22 (New) The composition according to claim 18, wherein said process further comprises replacing during the esterification reaction all or a portion of the volume of liquid removed from the reaction mixture with fresh alcohol.

Claim 23 (New) The composition according to claim 18, wherein said process further comprises separating the liquid removed from the reaction mixture into an aqueous phase and an organic phase and recycling the organic phase into the reaction mixture during the esterification reaction.

Claim 24 (New) The composition according to claim 18, wherein said process further comprises separating the liquid removed from the reaction mixture into an aqueous phase and an organic phase and recycling the organic phase, which is admixed with fresh alcohol, into the reaction mixture during the esterification reaction.

Claim 25 (New) The composition according to claim 18, wherein the at least one alcohol having from 7 to 13 carbon atoms is selected from linear or branched, monohydric or

polyhydric, optionally isomerically pure alcohols having the same or different number of carbon atoms.

Claim 26 (New) The composition according to claim 18, wherein the at least one alcohol is selected from monohydric heptanols, octanols, nonanols, decanols, and tridecanols.

Claim 27 (New) The composition according to claim 26, wherein the monohydric octanols are selected from 1-octanol, 2-octanol and 2-ethylhexanol, and the monohydric decanol is 2-propylheptanol.

Claim 28 (New) The composition according to claim 18, wherein the alcohol is used in stoichiometric excess of 5-50%.

Claim 29 (New) The composition according to claim 18, wherein the tin(II) catalyst is selected from tin(II) salts of monocarboxylic or dicarboxylic acids.

Claim 30 (New) The composition according to claim 18, wherein a molar ratio of tin(II) to benzoic acid is from  $10^{-5}$ :1 to  $10^{-3}$ :1 immediately prior to said reacting.

Claim 31 (New) The composition according to claim 18, wherein the benzoate mixture has a tin(II) concentration of less than 0.1 mg/kg (ppm).

Claim 32 (New) The composition according to claim 18, wherein the benzoic acid is esterified to an acid number of less than 0.1 mg KOH/g as determined in accordance with DIN EN ISO 2114.

Claim 33 (New) The composition according to claim 18, wherein the benzoic acid is esterified to an acid number of less than 0.04 mg KOH/g as determined in accordance with DIN EN ISO 2114.

Claim 34 (New) The composition according to claim 18, wherein the benzoate mixture comprises isononyl benzoate and one or more benzoic esters in a combined amount of greater than 99.5%.

Claim 35 (New) The composition according to claim 18, wherein the benzoate mixture comprises isononyl benzoate and one or more benzoic esters in a combined amount of greater than 99.7%.

Claim 36 (New) The composition according to claim 18, wherein the benzoate mixture comprises isononyl benzoate and one or more benzoic esters in a combined amount of greater than 99.9%.

Claim 37 (New) A product comprising the composition according to claim 18, wherein the product is selected from paints, varnishes, adhesives, mortars, or viscosity reducers and plasticizers for plastisols.

Claim 38 (New) A composition comprising a benzoate mixture of isononyl benzoate and one or more benzoic esters whose alkoxy groups have from 7 to 13 carbon atoms, wherein the benzoate mixture has a tin(II) concentration of less than 1 mg/kg (ppm).

Claim 39 (New) The composition according to claim 38, wherein the at least one alcohol having from 7 to 13 carbon atoms is selected from linear or branched, monohydric or polyhydric, optionally isomerically pure alcohols having the same or different number of carbon atoms.

Claim 40 (New) The composition according to claim 38, wherein the at least one alcohol is selected from monohydric heptanols, octanols, nonanols, decanols, and tridecanols.

Claim 41 (New) The composition according to claim 40, wherein the monohydric octanols are selected from 1-octanol, 2-octanol and 2-ethylhexanol, and the monohydric decanol is 2-propylheptanol.

Claim 42 (New) The composition according to claim 38, wherein the benzoate mixture comprises isononyl benzoate and one or more benzoic esters in a combined amount of greater than 99.5%.

Claim 43 (New) The composition according to claim 38, wherein the benzoate mixture comprises isononyl benzoate and one or more benzoic esters in a combined amount of greater than 99.7%.

Claim 44 (New) The composition according to claim 38, wherein the benzoate mixture comprises isononyl benzoate and one or more benzoic esters in a combined amount of greater than 99.9%.

Claim 45 (New) A product comprising the composition according to claim 38, wherein the product is selected from paints, varnishes, adhesives, mortars, or viscosity reducers and plasticizers for plastisols.